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WAGNER

TWILIGHT OF THE GODS


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THE RING
OF THE
NIBLUNG

R. WAGNER

THE TWILIGHT
OF THE GODS

(F. J. J. J.)

SCHOTT & CO,
LONDON.

SCHOTT & Co.

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THE TWILIGHT OF THE GODS.

—o—
THIRD DAY OF THE TRILOGY:

THE RING OF THE NIBLUNG

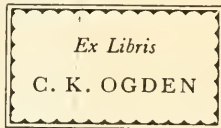
BY

RICHARD WAGNER.

TRANSLATED INTO ENGLISH

BY

FREDERICK JAMESON.



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Prelude. The Valkyries' rock. — The three Norns sing in the night of past, present and future, weaving their rope of runes. As they foretell the burning of Walhall and the end of the gods, the rope breaks and the Norns disappear into the earth.

Act I, Scene I. The same place. — The sun rises and Siegfried and Brünnhilde enter from their cave. She sends him forth in quest of heroic adventures in the world, giving him her horse, Grane, and receiving from him the Ring as pledge of his love. The scene changes to:

Scene II. The interior of the Gibichungs' hall on the Rhine. — Gunther, Hagen, his half-brother (son of Alberich) and Gutrune, his sister, sit in converse. Hagen urges marriage on Gunther, naming Brünnhilde as a fitting bride for him. As, however, Siegfried alone can pass through the fire to win her, he proposes that Gutrune shall win Siegfried's love and induce him to serve Gunther. Siegfried's horn is heard and he presently enters and is made welcome. Gutrune brings him a potion which causes him to love her, forgetting Brünnhilde. He and Gunther swear "blood-brotherhood" and depart together for Brünnhilde's rock.

Act II, Scene I. The Valkyries' rock. — Waltraute, a Valkyrie, comes to beg Brünnhilde to give back the Ring to the Rhine-maidens and so avert the doom of the gods. Brünnhilde refuses and sends Waltraute away to take her defiance to Walhall. Siegfried, changed to Gunther's shape by the Tarnhelm, comes and

claims Brünnhilde as his bride. She resists and threatens him with the Ring. Siegfried struggles with her, overcomes her and wrests the Ring from her. He then commands her to go into the cave whither, after drawing his sword to lay between them as symbol of his fidelity to Gunther, he follows her.

Act II. Outside the Gibichungs' hall.— Early morning of the next day. After a short scene in which Alberich urges Hagen to get the Ring, Siegfried returns and tells Hagen and Gutrune of the winning of Brünnhilde and her approach with Gunther. Hagen calls together the vassals to welcome Gunther and his bride. The royal pair presently arrive and are received with great acclamation. Brünnhilde recognizes Siegfried, who does not know her, and seeing the Ring on his finger, asks Gunther what he has done with the ring he took from her. His confusion reveals the truth to her and she proclaims that she is wedded to Siegfried and not to Gunther. Siegfried swears on the point of Hagens spear that her accusation is false. She repeats it, taking the same oath. Siegfried, Gutrune and the Vassals go out to prepare for the double wedding celebration, Gunther, Hagen and Brünnhilde, left alone, solemnly condemn Siegfried to death for his treachery.

Act III, Scene I. An open place on the banks of the Rhine. — The three Rhine-maidens pray to the sun for the return of the Rhine-gold. Siegfried, who has strayed from his companions on a hunting expedition, comes to the river-bank. The maidens unsuccessfully attempt by wiles and warnings of ill-fate to get the Ring from him, and they finally swim away fortelling his death that very day. Gunther, Hagen and the vassals come to the place and all sit down to rest. At Hagen's suggestion Siegfried relates the story of his life, and when he comes to the episode of the pas-

sage through the fire, a draught given him by Hagen restores his memory, so that he unthinkingly tells of the waking and winning of Brünnhilde. All start up in amazement, and Hagen stabs Siegfried in the back with his spear. Siegfried falls, and after a few words sung to a vision of Brünnhilde, dies. His body is placed on a bier and borne away by the vassals with great pomp and state as the sun sets.

Scene II. The interior of the Gibichungs' hall as in Act I. Night. — Gutrune comes from her chamber in anxiety about Siegfried. Presently Hagen's voice is heard calling for torches to light the returning hunters. He enters and in reply to Gutrune's questions tells her that Siegfried has been slain by a wild boar. The vassals enter, bearing Siegfried's body, which is placed on a bier in the centre of the hall. Hagen claims the Ring as his right for slaying Siegfried, but Gunther defies him to touch Gutrune's heritage. They fight and Gunther falls. As Hagen approaches the corpse to take the Ring, the dead Siegfried raises his arm threateningly. All start back in horror as Brünnhilde enters at back and comes down to the bier. Here, after ordering a pyre to be built on the river bank, she sings a funeral song over Siegfried. The body, from which she has taken the Ring is then placed on the pyre which she lights. Her horse is brought. She mounts it and springs into the flames which flare up and seize on the hall itself. The river overflows and rolls over the fire. The Rhine-maidens swim up and regain the Ring. Hagen rushes into the flood to get it from them, but is dragged down to the depths by their arms as they swim away. In the sky a vision of Walhall in flames is seen.

PERSONS.

—○—
SIEGFRIED.

GUNTHER.

HAGEN.

ALBERICH.

BRÜNNHILDE.

GUTRUNE.

WALTRAUTE.

THE NORNS.

THE RHINE-DAUGHTERS.

VASSALS. WOMEN.

8.208
Peter Cornelius
Frederick Austin
Geo. Kinsler
Thos. Neux
Miss Percival Allen
" Edith Grant
" Lane Thornton
Lane Thornton Caroline Ketchard
Honora Spurr



PRELUDE.

—o—

On the Valkyries' rock.

The scene is the same as at the close of the second day. — Night. Firelight shines up from the valley at the back.

The three Norns,

tall women in dark veil-like drapery. The first (oldest) lies in the foreground on the right under the spreading pine-tree; the second (younger) is stretched on a rock in front of the cave; the third (youngest) sits in the centre at back on a rock below the peak.

Gloomy silence and stillness.

The first Norn

(without moving).

What light shineth there?

The second Norn.

Dawneth the day so soon?

The third Norn.

Loge's host
glows in flame around the fell.

Still 'tis night.

Why spin we and sing we not now?

The second Norn

(to the first).

While we are spinning and singing,
whereon stretch we the rope?

The first Norn

(whilst she unwinds a golden rope from herself and ties one end of it to a branch of the pine-tree).

Be good or ill the song,
winding the rope, thus sing I. —

At the world-ash-tree
once I wove,
when far and wide
from the stem outbranched
a wondrous verdant wood.
In its cooling shadow
rose a spring:
whisp'ring wisdom
rippled its waves;
of holy things I sang. —

A dauntless god
came to drink at the well;
as eternal tribute
paid was the light of an eye.
From the world-ash-tree
Wotan's hand a branch did break;
from the bough he shaped
the mighty shaft of his spear. —

The wound, as time grew old,
wasted the life of the wood;
sere, leafless and stricken,
fast faded the tree;
sadly then failed
the fountain's flow:
darksome meaning
filled all my song.
To-day I weave
at the world-ash-tree no more,
now must the pine-tree
serve me to fasten the rope:
sing, o sister;
wind thou the rope —
know'st thou what befell?

The second Norn

(winds the rope thrown to her round a projecting rock at the
entrance of the cave).

Runes of treaties,
deeply pondered,

graved Wotan
in the shaft of the spear:
he holds it to sway the world.
A hero bold
in fight has broken the spear;
in splinters shivered
the treaties' hallowed haft.
Then bade Wotan
Walhall's heroes
to hew down
the world-ash's stem
and the withered boughs to cut in pieces:
the ash-tree sank:
spent then for aye was the spring.
Now round the sharp-edged rock
I bind the rope,
sing, o sister;
wind thou the rope:
knowst thou what will hap?

The third Norn

(catching the rope and throwing the end behind her).

The castle stands
by giants upraised:
with the gods and the hallowed
host of the heroes
sitteth Wotan on high.
The lofty pile
of riven boughs
like a wall
standeth round Walhall:
the world-ash-tree was this once!
When its wood
burneth, glowing and bright,
then shall flames
feed on the glittering halls:
the end of all godhood
dawneth then for ever and aye.

Know ye yet more?
Then wind ye the rope once again;
from northward now
I cast it to thee.

Spin, o sister, and sing thou!

(She throws the rope to the second Norn, who throws it to the first.)

The first Norn

(who loosens the rope from the bough and fastens it on another.)

Dawneth the day?
Is it fire that flickers?
My sight sorrow has dimmed;
the holy vision
of old time fadeth,
when Loge long since
blazed forth in glowing flame.
Know'st thou what happed to him?

The second Norn

(winding the rope thrown to her again round the rock).

By the spear's enchantment
Wotan enthralled him;
help he gave to the god.
From his galling fetters
freedom to win,
he gnawed the runes of the shaft:
then with the mighty
spell of the spear-point
Wotan confined him,
flaming round Brünnhilde's fastness.
Know'st thou what will befall?

The third Norn

(throwing behind her the rope thrown to her by the second Norn).

With the shattered spear-shaft's
piercing splinters
Wotan woundeth
the burning one deep in the breast:
ravaging flames
flare from the wound

and seize the shaft,
which the god casts
'mid the heaped up boughs of the ash-tree.
What befalleth,
would ye know?

Wind then, sisters, the rope!

(She throws the rope back; the second Norn winds it up and
throws it back again to the first.)

The first Norn

(fastening the rope again).

The night wanes;
dark are my senses:
I feel no more
the strands of the rope;
unwound and loose are its threads.
A hideous sight
wounds and vexes mine eyes:
the Rhine-gold
robbed by Alberich once: —
know'st thou what came thereof?

The second Norn

(with busy haste winds the rope round the jagged rock at the cave's
mouth).

The rope is parting,
cut by the crag,
no more fast
is its hold on the rock;
it hangs ravelled and frayed:
through wrath and wrong
rises the Nibelung's ring:
a curse of revenge
gnaws at the mouldering strands: —
know'st thou what comes thereof?

The third Norn

(hastily catching the rope thrown to her).

Too slack is the rope,
it reaches not.
If to the north
its end shall be cast,
yet straighter must it be stretched!
(She pulls hard at the rope, which breaks).

The second Norn.
It breaks!

The third Norn.
It breaks!

The first Norn.
It breaks!

They take hold of the pieces of the broken rope and bind their bodies together with them.

The three Norns.
No more speaketh our wisdom!
The world now
shall hear us no more.
Descend! To Erda! Descend!

(They vanish.)

The red glow of sunrise grows; the light of the fire from below gradually fades.

Siegfried and Brünnhilde

(enter from the cave; he is fully armed, she leads her horse by the bridle).

Brünnhilde.

Beloved hero,
forth must I send thee,
love helpeth not
holding thee here!
One only doubt yet
makes me linger:
that all thy winning
hath little worth.

What gods have shewn me
gave I thee:
holiest runes
in richest hoard;
but all my maidhood's
hallowed strength
stole he from me,
who is now my hero.

In wisdom weak —
but strong in will:
in love so rich —
so poor in power,
her scanty worth
thou wilt disdain not,
who all has granted —
and nought more can give!

Siegfried.

Wonder of women,
more gav'st thou than I can ward:
o chide not, if thy lessons
have left me still untaught.
One rede yet I well have read:
that for me Brünnhild' lives;
one lesson well I learned:
Brünnhilde to remember!

Brünnhilde.

Wilt thou with love ever bless me,
remember only thyself:
thy dauntless deeds remember:
remember the flaming fire
that fearless thou defied'st,
when around the rock it burned —

Siegfried.

Brünnhilde so to win me!

Brünnhilde.

Forget not the shield-hidden maid
whom in slumber deep thou foundest,
and whose fastened helm thou didst break —

Siegfried.

Brünnhilde to awaken!

Brünnhilde.

Those oaths remember
that have bound us;

the troth remember
that we plighted;
the love we live for
aye remember: -
Brünnhilde then will burn
for ever deep in thy breast! —

Siegfried.

Love, I leave thee alone
in thy fastness guarded by fire;
for all thy runes I give thee
now as guerdon this ring.
Of the deeds my hand performed
the virtue there doth lie.
With my sword a dragon I slew,
who long had watched it in hate.
Now guard thou surely the gold
as witness true of my love!

Brünnhilde

(putting on the ring in rapture).

Ne'er shall it be reft from my hand!
For the ring take thou now my horse!
 Though he once did fly
 with me through the heavens,
 with me
he lost all his magic power;
 over clouds afar,
 'mid lightning and thunder,
 no more
boldly aloft will he fly;
 yet where'er thou shalt lead,
 — e'en through the fire —
fearlessly Grane will follow:
 for henceforth, hero,
 shall he obey thee.
 O, ward him well;
 he knows thy voice: —
 O, speak to Grane
oft Brünnhilde's name!

Siegfried.

Then through thy virtue alone
will shine my deeds of valour!
All my battles thou wilt choose,
all my triumphs thou wilt achieve!
If with thy shield I ward me,
if on thy steed I fight,
then Siegfried am I no more,
I am but Brünnhilde's arm.

Brünnhilde.

O were but Brünnhilde thy spirit!

Siegfried.

Through her my valour doth burn.

Brünnhilde.

Then thou wert Siegfried and Brünnhilde!

Siegfried.

Where I am, both are together.

Brünnhilde.

Then my rock home deserted lies?

Siegfried.

Made one, both there abide!

Brünnhilde

(in highest excitement).

O heavenly rulers!
race of eternal!
turn now your eyes
on this hallowed pair!
Apart — who shall divide us?
Divided — ne'er will we part!

Siegfried.

Hail, o Brünnhilde,
radiant star!
Hail, rapture of loving!

Brünnhilde.

Hail, o Siegfried,
conquering light!
Hail, rapture of living!

Both.

Hail! Hail!

SIEGFRIED leads the horse down the rock. BRÜNNHILDE watches him for a long time in ecstasy. From below, SIEGFRIED's horn is heard, gaily sounding. The curtain falls.

(The orchestra takes up the tune of the horn and works it up through a vigorous movement. The first act then begins without break.)

FIRST ACT.

—o—

The hall of the Gibichungs on the Rhine.

This is quite open at the back. The background itself presents an open shore as far as the river; rocky heights enclose the shore.

Gunther, Hagen and Gutrune.

(GUNTHER and GUTRUNE on a throne on one side, before which stands a table with drinking vessels on it; HAGEN is seated in front of the table.)

Gunther.

Give ear, Hagen;
tell me now true:
is my fame on the Rhine
worthy of Gibich's name?

Hagen.

Thy glory's lustre
wakens my envy;
for she who gave us life,
Dame Grimhild', told of thy greatness.

Gunther.

I envy thee;
then envy not me.
Mine though the first-born's right,
wisdom was thine alone.
Half-brothers' strife
was ne'er so well ended;
'tis thy wisdom wins my praise,
when I ask of my renown.

Hagen.

Then blame I my word,
since flawed is thy fame:
for treasures rare I wot of
that the Gibichungs not yet have won.

Gunther.

If these thou hide,
I blame thee too.

Hagen.

In ripeness and strength of summer
standeth Gibich's race,
thou, Gunther, yet unwived,
thou, Gutrun, yet unwed.

Gunther.

Whom wouldst thou I should wed
that we new fame may win?

Hagen.

A wife waits thee,
the noblest in the world: —
'mid mountain rocks her home;
a fire surroundeth her hall:
who breaks through the flaming fire
may Brünnhilde's wooer be.

Gunther.

And serves not my strength for the task?

Hagen.

For a stronger one it is decreed.

Gunther.

Who is that boldest of men?

Hagen.

Siegfried, the Wälsung-son,
he is the chosen man.

A twin-born pair,
in love's enthrallment,
Sigmund and Sieglinde
begat them the hero renowned.
Strong and bold he grew in the woods,
him would I Gutrun' should wed.

Gutrune.

What deed brought him such fame,
that of heroes the first he is named?

Hagen.

At Neidhöhle
the Niblung's hoard
long since by a dragon was held:
Siegfried closed
his threatening jaws,
and slew him with conquering sword.
That great and wondrous deed
first won him a hero's fame.

Gunther.

The hoard of the Niblungs holdeth,
men say, a jewel of worth.

Hagen.

The man who its might doth know,
would bend all the world to his will.

Gunther.

And Siegfried won it in fight?

Hagen.

Thrall are the Niblungs to him.

Gunther.

And Brünnhild' he only can win?

Hagen.

To none other waneth the fire.

Gunther

(rises angrily from his seat).

Why wak'st discord and doubt?
Why stir my heart's desire
by dreams of delights
I may not win?

Hagen.

Yet should Siegfried
bring home the bride,
then were not Brünnhilde thine?

Gunther

(walks to and fro in agitation).

Yet how could I force this man
for me to win the bride?

Hagen.

Thy prayer alone would force him,
were but Gutrun' his wife.

Gutrune.

Thou mocker, evil Hagen!
What spell have I to bind him?
If he of heroes
be first on earth,
the fairest women in the world
long since would have won his love.

Hagen.

Dost mind the drink in the chest?
put trust in me who brought it home;
'twill bind him whom thou dost choose
fast in love's fetters to thee.
Let now but Siegfried come
and taste of the magical draught,
that he e'er a woman has seen, —
that one anear him e'er came —
then straightway must he forget. —
Now answer: —
how like ye Hagen's rede?

Gunther

(has again come to the table and, leaning upon it, stands attentively).

All praise be to Grimhild,
that now this brother is ours!

Gutrune.

Might but Siegfried hither come!

Gunther.

What spell may find him out?

Hagen.

Merrily hunts he,
seeking renown;
as through a wood
he sweeps the world:

while restless he storms on his way,
to the Gibich's home will he come.

Gunther.

Welcome to him would I give.

(Siegfried's horn is heard in the distance. — Both listen.)

A horn from the Rhine I hear.

Hagen

(looks down the river, and calls towards the back).

On board a vessel man and horse!
He blows so gaily the horn! —

With an easy stroke,
as from indolent hand,
he drives the boat
fast through the waves:
so mighty an arm
only one can own;
his it must be
who the dragon slew: —
Siegfried is it, surely none other!

Gunther.

Comes he to us?

Hagen

(calls towards the river through his hollowed hands).

Hoiho! Whom seek'st thou,
hero blithe?

Siegfried

(from the distance).

The stalwart son of Gibich.

Hagen.

His hall awaits thee with welcome here.
Hither! Here come to land!
Hail! Siegfried! hero hail!

(SIEGFRIED lays to.)

GUNTHER has joined Hagen at the shore. GUTRUNE sees Siegfried from the throne, fixes her gaze on him for a while in joyful surprise and, as the men approach the hall, withdraws in visible confusion to her apartment through a door on the left.

Siegfried

(who has led his horse to the shore and now quietly leans upon him).

Who is Gibich's son?

Gunther.

Gunther, I, whom thou seek'st.

Siegfried.

Far on the Rhine
thy fame hath spread:
now fight with me,
or be my friend!

Gunther.

Come in peace!
Be thou welcome!

Siegfried.

Where resteth my horse?

Hagen.

Mine be his charge.

Siegfried.

Thou call'st me Siegfried:
met we ere now?

Hagen.

I knew by thy might
who thou must be.

Siegfried.

Tend Grane right gently!
of nobler strain
thy hand never held
by bridle a steed.

HAGEN leads the horse away to the right, behind the hall, and returns immediately. GUNTHER walks across the hall with SIEGFRIED.

Gunther.

O hero, gladly greet
the halls where dwelt my fathers.
 Where'er thou standest,
 whate'er thou seest
I freely grant thee:
 thine is my birth-right,
 folk and land —
pledge of troth be my life-blood! —
Henceforth am I thine own.

Siegfried.

Nor land nor folk have I to grant,
nor father's house and hall:
 all my birth-right —
 my body's life —
living wasteth away.
 Yet a sword-blade
 have I forged me —
pledge of troth be my weapon! —
That with myself give I thee.

Hagen

(standing behind them).

Of the hoard of the Niblungs
rumour nameth thee lord.

Siegfried.

The treasure had I forgot;
so lightly its wealth I prize!
I in a cavern left it lying,
where a dragon once held watch.

Hagen.

And nought didst take therefrom?

Siegfried

(pointing at a cap of chain-mail hanging on his belt).

Nought but this, not knowing its use!

Hagen.

The Tarnhelm it is,
the Niblung's cunningest work:

it serves, when set on thy head,
to transform thee e'en as thou wilt;
wouldst fain go to far off lands,
thy desire straight were fulfilled. —
Nought else took'st thou from the hoard?

Siegfried.

A ring.

Hagen.

That holdest thou safe?

Siegfried.

'Tis held by a woman fair.

Hagen

(aside).

Brünnhilde! . . .

Gunther.

Nought, Siegfried, now shalt thou give me;
dross would pay thee in return,
though all my wealth thou shouldst win:
without guerdon thee will I serve.

HAGEN has gone to Gutrune's door and now opens it. GUTRUNE enters and approaches Siegfried, carrying a filled drinking horn.

Gutrune.

Welcome, o guest,
to Gibich's house!
From his daughter take thou this drink.

Siegfried

(bows friendly to her and takes the horn; he holds the horn meditatively before him):

If lost were all
thou gavest to me,
one lesson still
I ne'er will forget;
this draught, the first
my lips have tasted,
Brünnhild', I drink to thee!

He puts the drink-horn to his lips and drinks a long draught. He returns the drink-horn to Gutrune who casts down her eyes before him in shame and confusion.

Siegfried

(fixes his eyes on her with suddenly inflamed passion).

O thou who dost blind
my sight by thy look,
why sink'st thou before me thine eyes?
(GUTRUNE, blushing, raises her eyes to his face.)

Siegfried.

Ha, fairest maid!
veil thy look!
the heart in my breast
burns in its beams,
to fiery scorching streams
I feel it kindle my blood!

(With trembling voice.)

Gunther, what name is thy sister's?

Gunther.

Gutrune.

Siegfried.

Are good the runes
that there in her eyes I am reading?

(He seizes Gutrune's hand ardently.)

With thy brother service I have sought:
his pride refused my bond; —
wilt thou like him deny my prayer,
if for thy grace I crave?

(GUTRUNE involuntarily meets Hagen's look. She humbly bows her head and, with a gesture expressing her feeling of unworthiness, she leaves the hall with faltering steps.)

Siegfried

observantly watched by Hagen and Gunther, follows Gutrune with his eyes as if entranced):

Hast thou, Gunther, a wife?

Gunther.

Not wed am I yet,
and for a wife

seemeth it vain to seek:
on one my heart have I set,
whom no deed of mine can win.

Siegfried

(turns with animation to Gunther).

What canst thou not win,
with me for friend?

Gunther.

On mountain rocks her home;
A fire surrounds her hall —

Siegfried

(as if striving with intense effort to remember something):

“On mountain rocks her home
A fire surrounds her hall”..?

Gunther.

Who breaks through the flaming fire —

Siegfried

(breaking in hastily in astonishment).

“Who breaks through the flaming fire”..?

Gunther.

— may Brünnhilde’s wooer be.

(SIEGFRIED shews by a gesture that at the mention of Brünnhilde’s name his remembrance has quite faded.)

Gunther.

I may not set foot on the mountain;
the fire wanes not for me!

Siegfried

(eagerly starting up).

I — fear no fire:
for thee I will win the bride;
for thy man am I
and my arm is thine,
if Gutrun’ thou giv’st me to wife.

Gunther.
Gutrune gladly I grant thee.

Siegfried.
Brünnhilde, then, shall be thine.

Gunther.
How wilt thou beguile her?

Siegfried.
By the Tarnhelm's craft
changed shall my shape be for thine.

Gunther.
Then let the oath now be sworn!

Siegfried.
Blood-brotherhood
bound be by oath!

HAGEN fills a drinkinghorn with wine; he holds it out to SIEGFRIED and GUNTHER who cut their arms with their swords and hold them for few moments over the top of the horn.

Siegfried and Gunther.
Blossoming life's
renewing blood
into the draught I shed.
Boldly mixed
in brotherly love,
bloom our blood in the draught!
Troth I drink to the friend!
Blithe and free
let bloom from our bond,
blood-brotherhood aye!
Broke if e'er be the bond,
false if friend be to friend,
what in drops of love
here we have drunken
in streams shall freely flow:
traitor thus shall atone!

So — swear I the oath:
so — plight I my faith!

They drink in turn, each a half; HAGEN, who has stood aside during the oath, then strikes the horn in pieces with his sword. SIEGFRIED and GUNTHER clasp hands.

Siegfried

(to HAGEN).

Thou took'st in our troth-plaint no part?

Hagen.

My blood were bane to your drink;
not pure and free
like yours doth it flow:
stubborn and cold
scarce it stirs;
my cheek it never doth redden:
so, far I keep
from fiery bonds.

Gunther.

Give no heed to his spleen!

Siegfried.

Forth let us fare!
There lies my boat:
swiftly sail to the mountain!
By the shore but one night
on board shalt thou tarry;
the bride then shall be thine.

Gunther.

Takest thou first no rest?

Siegfried.

Let my labour win my rest.

(He goes to the shore to cast the boat loose.)

Gunther.

Thou, Hagen, be guard of the homestead!

(He follows SIEGFRIED to the shore.)

(GUTRONE appears at the door of her apartment.)

Gutrune.

So fast! say, whither fly they?

Hagen.

They fly, Brünnhild' to wed.

Gutrune.

Siegfried?

Hagen.

See, how he hastes!

For wife, so would he win thee!

SIEGFRIED has seized an oar and with its strokes drives the boat down the stream so that it is quickly lost to view.

Gutrune.

Siegfried — mine!

(She returns to her apartment in lively agitation.)

Hagen

(sits motionless, leaning his back against the post of the hall entrance).

Here sit I on guard,
watching the house,
warding the hall from the foe.
Winds are wafting
Gibich's son;
afar to his wooing he fares.
His helm is held
by a hero bold,
for Gunther peril he braves;
His rightful bride
he brings to the Rhine;
with her he brings me — the ring! —
Ye sons of freedom,
blithesome companions,
sail ye now merrily on:
base though ye deem him,
ye all shall serve
the Nibelung's son.

(A curtain which closes in the hall is drawn and cuts the stage off from the audience. After a short orchestral prelude, during which the scenery is changed, the curtain, which before shut out all the front part of the hall, is entirely withdrawn.)

The rocky height,
(as in the prelude).

Brünnhilde

(slts at the entrance of the cave and looks on Siegfried's ring in silent thought. Overcome by joyful memories, she covers it with kisses, — when she suddenly hears a distant voice: she listens and looks sideways into the background).

Sounds, familiar of old,
send to my ear a greeting.
A steed 'tis, hither
winging his flight;
on the cloud it fares
in storm to the fell. —
Who seeks this lonely one here?

Waltraute's

(voice from the distance).

Brünnhilde! Sister!
Wake from thy slumber!

Brünnhilde

(starts from her seat).

Waltraute's call!
how joyful the sound! —
Com'st thou sister,
boldly ridest thou to me?

(Calling to the wing.)

There in the wood —
still dear to thee —
light from thy horse,
and leave him there to take rest.

Com'st thou to me?
So bold art thou?
Dar'st thou undaunted
bring thy greeting to me?

She runs into the wood, from which a loud sound like a thunder-clap is heard. BRÜNNHILDE comes back in violent agitation with WALTRAUTE; she remains in joyful excitement, without observing WALTRAUTE's anxious fear.

Waltraute.

Thou alone
art cause of my haste!

Brünnhilde

(in the highest joyful excitement).

So rashly thou, dauntless in love,
War-father's ban hast broken?

Or perchance? O say!

may I, then, hope

Wotan's thought is changed? —

When against the godhead

Siegmond I guarded,

failing — I know it —

my deed fulfilled his desire.

That his anger is ended

know I too.

For, albeit he left me here,

fettered in sleep on the fell,

destined as thrall to the man

who should wake the maid in his path —

to my piteous prayer

he granted grace:

with ravening fire

he surrounded the fell,

to bar to all cravens the way.

So my blessing

was born of my sentence:

the hero most famed

hath won me for wife!

Blest by his love,

in light and laughter I live.

Lured wert thou, sister, by my lot?

Upon my joy

wouldst thou also feed thee?

share all that I have won?

Waltraute.

Share all the frenzy

that hath maddened thy brain? —

In anguish of dread have I come

and broken Wotan's behest.

Brünnhilde.

Pain and fear
fetter thy spirit?

Then the god hath pardoned me not?
Thou fearest the punisher's wrath?

Waltraute.

If still I feared it,
then at end were all my pain!

Brünnhilde.

Wonder bewilders my sense.

Waltraute.

Calm thou thy frenzy:
give good heed to my words!
To Walhall terror
drives me again,
that from Walhall drove me to thee.

Brünnhilde

(frightened).

What is't that doth ail the eternal?

Waltraute.

Hearken with heed to what I tell thee!
Since from thee Wotan turned him,
to battle no more
hath he sent us;
dazed with fear,
bewildered we rode to the field;
Walhall's heroes no more
may meet War-father.
Lonely to horse,
without pause or rest,
as Wand'rer he swept through the world.
Home came he at last;
in his hand holding
the spear-shaft's splinters:
a hero had struck it asunder.
With silent sign

Walhall's heroes
sent he to hew
the world-ash-tree in pieces.
The sacred stem
at his command was riven
and raised in a heap
round about the hall of the blest.
The holy host
called he together;
the god on his throne
took his place.
In dismay and fear
at his word they assembled;
around him ranged
the hall was filled by his heroes.
So — sits he,
speaks no word,
on high enthroned
grave and mute;
the shattered spearshaft
fast in his grasp;
Holda's apples
tastes he no more.
Awestruck and shrinking
sit the gods in silence. —
Forth on quest from Walhall
sent he his ravens;
if with good tidings
back the messengers come,
then for ever
shall smiles of joy
gladden the face of the god. —
Round his knees entwining
cower we Valkyries;
nought recks he
nor knows of our anguish:
we all are consumed
by terror and ne'er-ending fear.
Upon his breast

weeping I pressed me;
then soft grew his look;
he remembered, Brünnhilde, thee!
He closed his eyes,
deeply sighing,
and as in slumber
spoke he the words: --
“if e'er the river-maidens
win from her hand again the ring,
from the curse's load
released were god and world!”
Then I took thought,
and from his presence
through ranks all silent
stealing away,
with secret haste
I mounted my horse,
and rode in tumult to thee.
Now, o sister,
to thee I pray:
what thou canst do,
that dare to fulfil;
end all the grief of the gods!

Brünnhilde.

What tales of evil fancies
tellest thou, sad one, to me?
The cloudy heaven
of gods on high
have I, poor fool, now escaped;
I grasp not what thou dost tell me.
Dark and wild
seemeth thy speech;
and in thine eyes,
so overweary,
gleams wavering fire.
With cheeks so pallid,
thou white-faced sister,
what wouldst thou, wild one, from me?

Waltraute

(vehemently).

Upon thy hand, the ring —
'tis that: hear but my rede!
for Wotan cast it from thee!

Brünnhilde.

The ring? — from me?

Waltraute.

To the Rhine-daughters give it again!

Brünnhilde.

The Rhine-daughters — I — the ring?
Siegfried's love-pledge? —
Lost are thy senses?

Waltraute.

Hear me, hear my despair!
The world's ill-fate
surely hangeth thereon: —
cast it from thee,
away in the waters;
so shalt thou end Walhall's anguish:
the accurst thing fling in the flood!

Brünnhilde.

Ha! know'st thou what 'tis to me?
How canst thou grasp it,
loveless maid!
More than Walhall's rapture,
more than the fame of the gods —
is this my ring:
one glance at its lustrous gold,
one flash of its holy fire
more is to me
than all the heaven's
aye enduring delight!
For blissfully there
shineth the love of Siegfried:
love of Siegfried!

o might but its rapture be told thee! —
that — lives in the ring.

Go hence to the holy
council of gods!
And of my ring
repeat my words:
from love I never will turn,
of love they never shall rob me,
though into ruins
Walhall's splendour should fall!

Waltraute.

This is thy truth, then?
so thou leavest
unloved in her sorrow thy sister?

Brünnhilde.

Swiftly to horse!
speed thee away!
the ring thou winn'st not from me!

Waltraute.

Woe's me! Woe's me!
Woe to thee, sister!
Woe to Walhall's gods!

She rushes away. A storm-cloud soon rises from the wood with thunder.

Brünnhilde

(as she looks after the brightly illumined thunder-cloud which is soon quite lost in the distance).

Borne on the wind,
yon flashing storm-cloud
flieth afar:

to me ne'er more may it come! —

Evening has fallen. From below, the light of the fire shines gradually brighter.

Twilight of evening
hides the heaven;
brightly flameth
the rampart of fire round the fell.

Why leap so wildly
the blazing billows on high?
The mountain top
is girt by the fiery sea. —

From the valley Siegfried's horn-call is heard. BRÜNNHILDE starts up in delight.)

Siegfried!
Siegfried returned!
'Tis his call sounds in mine ears!
Up! — Up! now to meet him!
clasped in the arm of my god!

She hastens to the rocky parapet in the highest delight. Flames shoot up; from them SIEGFRIED springs forward on to a high rock: the flames immediately draw back and again shed their light only from below. — SIEGFRIED, with the Tarnhelm on his head, which hides the upper half of his face, leaving only his eyes free, appears in Gunther's form.

Brünnhilde

(shrinks back in terror).

Betrayed! — Who cometh here?

She flies to the foreground and from there fixes her eyes in speechless astonishment on Siegfried.

Siegfried

(remaining on the stone at back and leaning upon his shield, motionless, observes Brünnhilde — then speaks to her in a feigned — rougher voice).

Brünnhild! A wooer comes,
whom thy fire doth not fright.
Thee seek I now for wife:
wilt freely follow me?

Brünnhilde

(trembling violently).

Who is the man
who tempts undaunted
what the boldest only dares?

Siegfried

(still on the rock in the back-ground).

A hero who shall tame thee,
if force alone may serve.

Brünnhilde

(seized with horror).

A monster standeth
on yonder stone; —
to rend me in pieces
cometh an eagle! —
Who art thou, awful one?

(Siegfried is silent.)

Art thou a mortal?
com'st thou from Hella's
darksome host?

Siegfried

(after a long silence).

A Gibichung am I,
and Gunther is his name
whom thou shalt follow now.

Brünnhilde

(breaking out in despair).

Wotan! Thou ruthless,
merciless god!
Woe! Now my sentence
shines clear to me!
to shame and sorrow
giv'st thou me o'er!

Siegfried

(springs down from the stone and comes nearer).

The night draws on:
within thy cave
must thou to me be wedded!

Brünnhilde

(stretching out threateningly the finger on which she carries
Siegfried's ring).

Go back! Fear thou this token!
Thou shalt not force me to shame,
so long as this ring is my guard.

Siegfried.

Husband's-right so shall be Gunther's:
let the ring make thee his wife!

Brünnhilde.

Go back, thou robber!
foolhardy thief!
Defy not the might of my hand!
Stronger than steel
makes me the ring:
ne'er shall it be thine!

Siegfried.

From thee now to take it
teach me thy words!

He presses towards her. They wrestle together. BRÜNNHILDE wrenches herself free, flies and turns round as if to defend herself. SIEGFRIED seizes her again. She flees; he reaches her. Both wrestle violently together. He seizes her by the hand and draws the ring from her finger. BRÜNNHILDE shrieks violently. As she sinks down into his arms, as if broken, her unconscious look meets SIEGFRIED's eyes. He lets her fainting body slide down on to the stone bench at the entrance to the cave.

Siegfried.

Now art thou mine! —
Brünnhilde, Gunther's bride —
shew me the way to thy cave!
(BRÜNNHILDE stares fainting before her.)

Brünnhilde

(exhausted).

How now canst thou help thee,
illfated wife?

SIEGFRIED drives her on with a gesture of command. Trembling and with wavering steps she goes into the cave.

Siegfried

(draws his sword. — In his natural voice).

Now, Nothung, witness thou,
that I in bonds have wooed:
keep thou my troth to my brother,
let thy blade safeguard his bride!

(He follows Brünnhilde.)

The curtain falls.

SECOND ACT.

—o—

An open space on the shore

in front of the Gibichung's hall: on the right the open entrance to the hall, on the left the bank of the Rhine, from which, slanting across the stage to the back, rises a rocky height cut by several mountain paths. There FRICKA's altarstone is visible: higher up is a larger one for WOTAN and on the side is another for DÖNNER. — It is night. — HAGEN, with his arm round his spear and his shield by his side, sits asleep, leaning against one of the wooden pillars of the hall.

The moon suddenly shines out and throw a vivid light on HAGEN and the objects immediately surrounding him; ALBERICH is seen crouching before him, leaning his arms on HAGEN's knees.

Alberich.

Sleep'st thou, Hagen, my son?
Thou sleep'st and hear'st me not,
whom rest and sleep betrayed?

Hagen

(softly, without moving, so that he appears to sleep on although his eyes are open).

Thy voice I hear, evil Niblung:
what hast thou now to tell my slumber?

Alberich.

Forget not the might
that thou possessest,
if thou art valiant
as thy mother bore thee to me!

Hagen.

Though might through her was mine,
no debt of thanks I owe her,
that prey she fell to thy craft:
old in youth, weak and wan,
hating the happy,
ne'er am I glad!

Alberich.

Hagen, my son!
Hate thou the happy!

This joyless
and sorrowladen one
lov'st thou so as thou shouldst!
Be thou crafty,
strong and bold!
Those whom with weapons
of darkness we fight,
e'en now are dismayed by our hate.
And he who ravished my ring,
Wotan, the ravenous robber,
by one of his heroes
himself was vanquished:
through the Wälsung he lost
dominion and might;
with his clan of gods and heroes
in dread he waiteth his downfall.
I fear him no more:
sink will they all and perish!
Sleep'st thou, Hagen, my son?

Hagen

(remains motionless as before).
The might of the gods,
who then shall win?

Alberich.

I — and thou!
The world will be ours,
for in thy truth
my faith is firm;
thou sharest my wrath and hate.
Wotan's spear
was shattered by Siegfried,
and Fafner in fight
before him hath fall'n,
and left him as booty the ring;
power and might
wieldeth the Wälsung:
Walhall and Nibelheim
bow before him.

On the boldest of heroes
in vain lies my curse;
for to him hath
the ring no worth,
he knows nought
of its wonderful might.

Laughing in ardour of love
burns his life aye away.

'Tis his undoing
only can help us!

Sleep'st thou, Hagen, my son?

Hagen.

To work his undoing,
me doth he serve.

Alberich.

The golden ring
must thou rob from the Wälsung!
A woman wise
holdeth him in her love:
if, by her rede,
to the Rhine's fair daughters
— who in wat'ry deeps
my wisdom bewitched —
his hand should give back the ring;
for ever lost were the gold,
and no wiles could win it again.

Then without stint
strive thou for the ring:
I fostered thee
fearless for this;
that against heroes
safe thou shouldst hold me.
Though weak is my strength
to fight with the foe,
— who as prey to Siegfried was doomed —
yet deadly hatred

I bred in Hagen;
'tis his to avenge me,
the ring to win me,
in Walsung's and Wotan's despite!
Swear to me, Hagen, my son!

Hagen.
The ring will I gain me;
rest thou in peace!

Alberich.
Swear to me, Hagen, my son!

Hagen.
To myself swear I;
trust thou and fear not!

From this point a gradually darkening shadow again covers Alberich. At the same time morning twilight begins.

Alberich
(as, during the following bars, Alberich's form gradually disappears, his voice becomes more and more inaudible).

Be true, Hagen, my son!
Trusty hero! Be true!
Be true! — True!

Alberich has quite disappeared. HAGEN, who has remained in the same position, looks with fixed eyes and without moving towards the Rhine, over which the light of dawn spreads itself.
(From this point the Rhine becomes more and more deeply coloured by the glowing red of dawn.)

—o—

SIEGFRIED comes suddenly from behind a bush close to the shore. He appears in his own shape, but has the Tarnhelm on his head: he now takes this off and hangs it on his girdle as he comes forward.

Siegfried.
Hoiho! Hagen!
Weary man!
Wake thou and greet me!

Hagen
(rising leisurely).
Hei! Siegfried!
Thou speedy hero!
Whence stormest thou now?

Siegfried.

From Brünhilde's rock!
'Twas there that the breath was drawn
that called thee but now;
so fast hither I flew!
Toiling more slowly a pair
by boat behind me come!

Hagen.

Then won is Brünnhild'?

Siegfried.

Wakes Gutrune?

Hagen.

Hoiho! Gutrune!
Hither come!
Siegfried is here:
why linger'st thou?

Siegfried

(Turning to the hall).

Ye both shall hear
the tale of Brünnhild's fate.

(GUTRUNE comes from the hall to meet him.)

Siegfried.

Now give me welcome,
Gibich-maid!
for, tidings good to thee I bear.

Gutrune.

Freia greeteth thee
in name of woman's honour!

Siegfried.

Freely grant
thou grace to thy wooer:
for wife I have won thee to-day.

Gutrune.

Then comes Brünnhild' with my brother?

Siegfried.

Light was his wooing, I ween.

Gutrune.

Came he unharmed through the fire?

Siegfried.

Safe in its blaze had he been,
had I not dared it for him,
for so I sought to win thee.

Gutrune.

But thee hath it not harmed?

Siegfried.

I laughed in the tumult of flames.

Gutrune.

Held Brünnhild' thee for Gunther?

Siegfried.

Like were we to a hair:
the Tarnhelm served me well,
as Hagen truly foretold.

Hagen.

I gave thee goodly redes.

Gutrune.

Thy force tamed the valiant maid?

Siegfried.

She felt — Gunther's force.

Gutrune.

And she gave herself to thee?

Siegfried.

Through the night the dauntless Brünnhild'
to her rightful husband belonged.

Gutrune.

But the right in sooth was thine!

Mirthful maids
to the feast I call :
our merriment fain would they share !
(As she goes towards the hall, turning round again.)
Wilt thou rest, faithless man ?

Siegfried.

Helping Gutrun' is my rest.
(He gives her his hand and goes into the hall with her.)

— o —

Hagen

(has ascended a rock at the back and blows a great cow-horn with
all his might).

Hoiho! Hoiho! Hoiho!
Ye Gibich vassals,
gather ye here!
Arm ye! Arm ye!
Weapons! Weapons!
Arm through the land!
Goodly weapons!
Mighty weapons!
Sharp for strife!
Need! Need is here!
Need! Arm ye! Arm ye!
Hoiho! Hoiho hoho!

He blows his horn again. From different directions other
horns answer. By different paths armed Vassals rush on hastily.

The Vassals

(first singly, and then in continually increasing numbers together).

Why brays the horn?
who calls us to arms?
We come with our arms,
we come with our weapons:
with weapons of might,
with weapons sharp!
Hoiho! Hoiho!
Hagen! Hagen!
Tell what need is here!
Tell what foe is near!
Who brings us strife?
Is Gunther in need?

Hagen

(still from the rock).

Arm yourselves well
and loiter not!

Welcome give to your lord:
a wife Gunther hath won.

The Vassals.

What is his need?
Who is his foe?

Hagen.

A Valkyrie wife
bringeth he home.

The Vassals.

Her kinsmen and vassals
follow in anger?

Hagen.

Brünnhild' follows him;
none beside.

The Vassals.

Then his peril is past?
Then the fight has been fought?

Hagen.

The dragon-slayer
brought him the bride.
Siegfried, the hero,
held Gunther safe!

The Vassals.

Why call'st thou the host, then, together?

Hagen.

Sturdy steers now
shall ye slaughter;
on Wotan's altar
pour forth their blood!

The Vassals.

What, Hagen, what more dost bid us do?

Hagen.

Then a boar I bid you
strike down for Froh;
and a goat in his prime
kill ye for Donner,
sheep I bid you
slaughter for Fricka,
that grace she may grant to the marriage!

The Vassals

(with increasing hilarity).

Say to us, Hagen,
what then must we do?

Hagen.

The drink-horn take
that fairest women
with mead and wine
gaily have filled!

The Vassals.

The drink-horn in hand,
what have we then to do?

Hagen.

Freely carouse
until tamed by drink.
So to the gods give all honour,
that grace they may grant to the marriage!

The Vassals

(break out in ringing laughter).

Good hap and health
greet now the Rhine,
if Hagen, the grim one,
so merry may be!
The hedge's thorn
pricks now no more;
as wedding herald
plays he his part.

Hagen

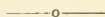
(who has remained very grave).

Now cease your laughing,
valiant Vassals!

Receive Gunther's bride!
Brünnhilde nears there with him.

(He has come down to the Vassals and now stands among them.)

Love well your lady,
faithfully help:
if she be wronged,
swift be your vengeance!



Gunther and Brünnhilde

have arrived in a boat. Some of the vassals spring into the water and draw the boat ashore. As GUNTHER leads BRÜNNHILDE to the shore, the vassals clash their weapons shouting. HAGEN stands aside in the background.

The Vassals.

Hail! Hail!
Be welcome! Be welcome!
Health to thee, Gunther!
Health to thy bride!

Gunther

(leading Brünnhilde by the hand, from the boat).

Brünnhild', the fairest wife,
here to the Rhine I bring.
By man ne'er was won
a nobler woman.
On Gibich's glorious race,
shone ever grace from the gods;
to highest fame
now shall we rise!

The Vassals

(clash their weapons).

Hail thou, Gunther!
Happiest Gibichung!

GUNTHER leads BRÜNNHILDE, who has never raised her eyes, to the hall from which SIEGFRIED and GUTRUNE now come forth, attended by women.

Gunther

(stops with BRÜNNHILDE before the hall).

I greet thee, hero mine,
and thee, lovely sister!
Gladly I see thee beside him
who now hath won thee for wife.

Two pairs in wedlock
here shall find blessing:
Brünnhilde — and Gunther,
Gutrune — and Siegfried!

BRÜNNHILDE, startled, raises her eyes and sees SIEGFRIED; her look remains fixed on him as in astonishment. GUNTHER, who has released BRÜNNHILDE's violently trembling hand, shews as do all, blank astonishment at BRÜNNHILDE's behaviour.

The Vassals and Women.

What ails her?

Siegfried

(goes a few steps towards BRÜNNHILDE).

What clouds Brünnhilde's brow?

Brünnhilde

(scarcely able to command herself).

Siegfried . . . here? Gutrune . . . ?

Siegfried.

Gunther's gentle sister,
won by me
as thou by him.

Brünnhilde.

I . . . Gunther . . . ? Thou liest! —
Light fades from mine eyes.

(She appears about to fall. SIEGFRIED supports her.)

Brünnhilde

(in SIEGFRIED's arms, looking faintly up at his face).

Siegfried . . . knows me not?

Siegfried.

Gunther, give thine aid to Brünnhild'!

(GUNTHER comes to them.)

Awaken, wife!

Here stands thy husband.

BRÜNNHILDE perceives the ring on SIEGFRIED's outstretched finger and starts with terrible vehemence.

Brünnhilde.

Ha! The ring
upon his hand!
He? Siegfried?

The Vassals and Women.
What is't?

Hagen

(coming from the back among the VASSALS).

Now give good heed
to the woman's tale!

Brünnhilde

(tries to recover herself, while she forcibly restrains the most terrible excitement).

On thy hand there
I beheld a ring; —
from me 'twas wrested,
not by Siegfried
(pointing to GUNTHER)

— but by him!
How came, then, from him
the ring to thy hand?

Siegfried

(attentively observes the ring on his finger).

The ring came not
to me from him.

Brünnhilde

(to GUNTHER).

Thou who didst rob the ring
with which I wedded thee,
now let him know thy right;
take back again the pledge!

Gunther

(in great perplexity).

The ring? — I gave him nothing: —
yet dost thou know it well?

Brünnhilde.

Where hidest thou the ring
that from my hand thou stolest?

(Gunther, greatly confused, is silent.)

Brünnhilde

(breaking out in violent passion).

Ha! — He it was
who from me did rob the ring:
Siegfried! the traitor and thief!

Siegfried

(who is absorbed in distant thoughts while contemplating the ring).

No woman's hand
gave me the ring;
nor woman was't,
from whom I wrested it:
I mind me well
of the booty won,
when at Neidhöhl' fought was the fight,
and the mighty dragon I slew.

Hagen

(coming between them).

Brünnhild', dauntless wife,
know'st thou right well the ring?
Is't that Gunther took from thee?
Then it is his, —
and Siegfried hath won it by guile,
that the traitor must now atone!

Brünnhilde

(shrieking out in most terrible anguish).

Betrayed! Betrayed!
Shamefully betrayed!

Deceit! Deceit!
Guile beyond all revenge.

Gutrune.

Deceit? To whom?

The Vassals and Women.

Deceit? To whom?

Brünnhilde.

Holy gods!
ye heavenly rulers!
Have ye ordained
this dark decree?
Ye who have doomed me
to anguish so dire,
ye who have sunk me
so deep in disgrace,
teach me such vengeance
as ne'er was revealed!
stir in me wrath
that may never be stilled!
Let but Brünnhilde's
heart now be broken;
bring her betrayer
so to his death!

Gunther.

Brünnhild', what say'st thou?
Calm thyself!

Brünnhilde.

Away, betrayer!
self-betrayed one! —
Hearken, then, all men:
know ye,
there standeth he
whose wife am I.

The Vassals and Women.

Siegfried? Wedded to her?

Brünnhilde.

He forced delight
and love from me.

Siegfried.

Thine own fair name
dost hold so lightly?
The tongue, then, that reviles it
must I convict of its falsehood? —
Say if I broke my faith!
Blood-brotherhood
have I plighted to Gunther:
Nothung, my goodly sword,
guarded the holy vow:
its blade in honour parted
this ill-starred bride from me.

Brünnhilde.

Thou crafty hero,
see thy lie!
Vainly thou call'st
as witness thy sword!
Its biting blade well know I,
the sheath, too, that wards it,
wherein as friend
reposed on the wall
Nothung, the trusty sword,
when his true-love was won by its lord.

The Vassals

(crowd together in indignation).

What? Siegfried a traitor?
Tainted is Gunther's honour?

Gunther.

My fame were sullied,
stained with disgrace,
were not her slander
cast in her teeth!

Gutrune.

Faithless, Siegfried,
false to thine oath?
Bear witness that wrongly
thou art charged!

The Vassals.

Right thyself now,
if thou art wronged!
Silence her slander!
Sworn be the oath!

Siegfried.

Stilled be her slander!
Sworn be the oath!
Whose spear shall serve me
as witness and ward?

Hagen.

Here I hold my spear-point!
swear ye thereon:

your oath my weapon shall ward!

The VASSALS form a ring round SIEGFRIED; HAGEN holds out his spear; SIEGFRIED lays two fingers of his right hand upon the spear-point.

Siegfried.

Shining steel!
hallowed weapon!
hold thou my oath in remembrance!
On this piercing spear-point
sworn be my oath:
spear-point, witness my word!
If weapon e'er shall pierce me,
thine be the point;
whene'er death comes to strike me,
thine be the stroke:
if this her tale be true,
if to my friend I am false!

Brünnhilde

(strides wrathfully into the ring, tears SIEGFRIED's hand away from the spear, and seizes the point with her own).

Shining steel!
hallowed weapon!
hold thou my oath in remembrance!
On this piercing spear-point
sworn be my oath: —
spear-point! witness my word!
Devoted be thy might
to his undoing!
I pray that by thy
point he may perish!
for, broken are all his vows,
and falsehood now hath he sworn!

The Vassals

(greatly excited).

Help, Donner!
Send us thy thunder
to silence this crying disgrace!

Siegfried.

Gunther, look to the woman,
who lying slanders thy name.
Grant her rest awhile,
the tameless mountain maid,
till her unbridled rage be bated,
that by some demon's
evil craft
here against all hath been roused!
Ye vassals, turn ye away!
leave the women to scold!
Like cravens gladly we yield,
when 'tis a battle of tongues.

(He comes close to GUNTHER.)

Sooth, more vexed am I than thou
that ill was she beguiled;
the Tarnhelm, by its spell,
methinks but hid me half.

But women's spite
swiftly is sped:
that for thee I have won her,
surely will she yet give thanks,

(He turns again to the Vassals.)

Follow, ye vassals,
blithe to the feast!
Gaily, women,
help at the wedding! —
Let your delight
laugh now aloud!
In house and field
freeest of lighthearts
shall ye find me today.
Ye whom love hath blest,
gaily share my gladness,
be ye as blithesome as I!

He throws in exuberant merriment his arm round GUTRUNE and draws her with him away into the hall. The VASSALS and WOMEN, carried away by his example, follow him.

— — o — —

Brünnhilde, Gunther and Hagen

remain behind. GUNTHER, with covered face, has seated himself on one side in fearful dejection.

Brünnhilde

(standing in the foreground and absorbed in meditation).

What demon's evil craft
here lieth hidden?
What wizard's hateful spell
stirred up this storm?
This knot to unravel
where is my wisdom?
Where shall I discover
runes for this riddle?

Oh sorrow! Sorrow!
Woe's me! Woe's me!
All my wisdom
gave I to him!

He holds the maid
fast by his might ;
he holds the booty
fettered in bondage,
whom, wailing for her disgrace,
gaily he giveth away !

Who lendeth me now the sword,
wherewith I may sever the bonds ?

Hagen

(coming close to Brünnhilde).

Give me thy trust,
betrayed wife !
I will avenge
thy wrong on him.

Brünnhilde.

On whom ?

Hagen.

On Siegfried, traitor to thee.

Brünnhilde.

On Siegfried ? thou ?

(smiling bitterly.)

One single flash
from his eye on thee glancing,
such as e'en through his lying disguise
looming glittered on me,
straight would cast dismay
over thy daring !

Hagen.

But on my spear-point
sworn was his falsehood ?

Brünnhilde.

Truth and falsehood —
useless are words !
With stronger spells
seek to arm thy weapon,
when at the strongest thou strik'st !

Hagen.

Well know I Siegfried's
conquering might,
how hard to slay him in battle;
then whisper me now
some goodly rede,
that he before me may fall.

Brünnhilde.

O, thankless, shameful return!
No single art
to me was known,
but his life is safe through its spell.
Unwitting he walks,
by my charms enwound,
that now hold him safe from harm.

Hagen.

Then no weapon's point can pierce him?

Brünnhilde.

In battle, none; — yet —
if at his back thou strik'st! —
Never — that knew I —
will he give way,
nor turn his back upon a foeman:
and there I gave him no blessing.

Hagen.

And there striketh my spear! —
(He turns quickly to GUNTHER.)
Up, Gunther,
noble Gibichung!
Here stands thy valiant wife:
why giv'st thou way to grief?

Gunther

(starting up passionately).

O shame!
O sorrow!
Woe is me,
of all men living the saddest!

Hagen.

In shame thou liest;
truth to tell.

Brünnhilde.

O craven man!
falsest of friends!
Hidden behind
the hero wert thou,
that victory's guerdon
he might win thee!
Deep had sunk
the glorious race
that bore such faint-hearts as thou!

Gunther

(beyond himself).

Deceived am I — and deceiver!
Betrayed am I — and betrayer!
Now crushed be my bones,
and broken my heart!
Help, Hagen!
Help for my honour!
Help for thy mother,
for thee, — too, did she bear!

Hagen.

Here helps no brain,
here helps not a hand:
nought helps but — Siegfried's death!

Gunther.

Siegfried's death!

Hagen.

Nought else purges thy shame!

Gunther

(seized with horror, staring before him).

Blood-brotherhood
truly we swore!

Hagen.
The broken bond
blood shall atone!

Gunther.
Broke he the bond?

Hagen.
In betraying thee!

Gunther.
Am I betrayed?

Brünnhilde.
He betrayed thee;
and me ye all are betraying!
Were I but just,
all the blood of the world
could not atone for your guilt!
But the death of one
now shall content me:
Siegfried falleth —
atonement for guilt of all!

Hagen
(to Gunther secretly).
His downfall brings thee gain!
Might o'er all the world were thine,
if thou from him win the ring
that but death will wrest from his hand.

Gunther.
Brünnhilde's ring?

Hagen.
The Niblung's golden charm.

Gunther.
Must this be Siegfried's downfall?

Hagen.
His death will serve us all.

Gunther.

Yet, Gutrune, ah!
whom he has wedded!
How should we stand before her,
with his blood upon our hands?

Brünnhilde

(starting up in a rage).

What redes have told me,
what runes have shewn me,
through heart-breaking anguish
shineth now clear:
Gutrune is the spell
whereby my hero was beguiled!
Ill-fate be hers!

Hagen

(to Gunther).

If this dole must be dealt her,
then hidden be the deed.
We hie to-morrow
merrily hunting;
the hero, struck by a boar,
may haply come by his death.

Gunther and Brünnhilde.

So shall it be!
perish Siegfried!
Purged be the shame
cast by his crime!
Holiest vows
hath he broken:
and with his blood
let him atone!

All-seeing
god of revenge!
Oath-witness
and lord of vows!

Wotan! Wotan!
Turn thee to me:
Call on thine awful
heavenly host;
bid them give ear
to the vow of revenge!

Hagen.

So shall it be!
Perish Siegfried!
So shall he fall —
the hero so famed!
Mine is the hoard,
my hand aye shall hold it:
from him the ring
shall be wrested!

Hearken, father,
thou fallen prince!
Night-warder!
Nibelung lord!
Alberich! Alberich!
Look thou on me!
Call now anew
on the Nibelung host,
bid them obey thee,
the lord of the ring!

GUNTHER and BRÜNNHILDE turn impetuously to the hall. SIEGFRIED and GUTRUNE (SIEGFRIED wearing a wreath of oak leaves, GUTRUNE with varied flowers in her hair) come to meet them at the entrance with their followers. GUNTHER grasps BRÜNNHILDE by the hand and follows quickly with her. HAGEN remains alone. — The curtain falls.

THIRD ACT.

—o—

A wild wooded, rocky valley

on the Rhine, which flows past a steep cliff in the background.

The three Rhine-Daughters

(WUOLINDE, WELLGUNDE and FLOSSHILDE rise to the surface and swim about, circling as in a dance).

Fair sunlight
sendeth rays of splendour ;
night lies in the waters.
Bright were they once
when through the waves
the radiant sun gleamed on the Rhine-gold.
Rhine-gold!
shining gold,
how bright was once thy lustre,
beauteous star of the waters!

Fair sunlight,
send us now the hero,
who again our gold shall give us!
Let it be ours,
then thy bright eye
no more will awaken our longing!
Rhine-gold!
shining gold!
how fair then thy lustre,
glorious star of the waters!
(SIEGFRIED's horn is heard from the height.)

Woglinde.

I hear now his horn.

Wellgunde.

The hero comes.

Flosshilde.

Let us take counsell!

(They dive down quickly.)

(SIEGFRIED appears on the cliff, fully armed.)

Siegfried.

Some elf hath led me astray,
and now the track I have lost: —
hey roguel! what rocky cave
has hidden so quickly my game?

The three Rhine-Daughters

(rise to the surface and swim as in a dance).

Siegfried!

Flosshilde.

Why scold'st thou so at the rocks?

Wellgunde.

Hath a fairy roused thine ire?

Woglinde.

Or hath an elf played thee false?

All Three.

Tell us, Siegfried! speak to us!

Siegfried

(smilingly regarding them).

Have ye, then, lured away
the shaggy-hided fellow
whom I have lost?
Is he your sweetheart?
then, frolicsome maids,
I leave him to you.

(The maidens laugh.)

Woglinde.

Siegfried, what giv'st thou us,
if we thy game should grant thee?

Siegfried.

Nought have I won to-day:
so ask of me what ye will!

Wellgunde.

A golden ring
gleams on thy finger —

The three Maidens

(together).

That give us!

Siegfried.

From a dragon fierce
I gained the ring in fight,
and for a worthless bear-skin
shall I give it you now as price?

Woglinde.

Art thou so mean?

Wellgunde.

So miserly, too?

Flosshilde.

Freehanded
aye with maids shouldst thou be!

Siegfried.

On you if I waste my goods,
belike, then, my wife will scold.

Flosshilde.

Is she a shrew?

Wellgunde.

She strikes, perchance?

Woglinde.

Hath the hero felt her hand?

(They laugh.)

Siegfried.

Now laugh ye gaily on!
in grief will ye be left:
the ring ye fondly crave
your mocking never shall win!

Flosshilde.

So fair!

Wellgunde.

So strong!

Woglinde.

So worthy love!

The Three

(together).

How sad that he a miser is!
(The laugh and dive down.)

Siegfried

(comes lower down).

Why must I brook
their idle mocks?
Shall I bear this shame? —
Let them but come
to the shore again,
the ring then would I give them. —
Hey hey! Ye merry
water-maidens!
Come now! I grant you the ring!

The three Rhine-maidens

(rise again to the surface. They appear grave and solemn).

Then keep it still
and ward it well,
till thou the ill-fate hast found
that in the ring lies hid.
Right fain wilt thou then
be freed by us from the curse.

Siegfried

(quietly places the ring again on his finger).

Then sing me what ye know!

The Rhine-Maidens

(severally and together).

Siegfried! Siegfried! Siegfried!

Evil fate we foresee.

For thine own illhap
hold'st thou the ring!
From the Rhine's pure gold
was the ring once wrought:
he who craftily shaped it
and lost it in shame
laid a curse thereon
for time to come
that doometh its lord
surely to death.

As thou slew'st the dragon
shalt thou be slain,
and here to-day,

— so now we foretell; —

if thou the ring wilt not yield,
to rest for aye in the waters.

This stream alone
stayeth the curse!

Siegfried.

Ye wily women,
hold your peace!

If your craft could not catch me,
by your threats still less will ye fright me!

The Rhine-Maidens.

Siegfried! Siegfried!

We counsel thee well:
turn thee! turn from the curse!

By Norns at dead
of night was it woven
in the rope
of fate's decrees.

Siegfried.

My sword once shattered a spear! —
the endless rope

of fate's decrees,
if in its strands
a curse hath been spun,
Nothing shall cut it asunder!
A dragon once warned me
to flee the curse,
but yet fear he brought not to me! —
The world's wealth
hath a ring on me bestowed:
for the grace of love
had it been yours —
and by your grace yet were it gained.
But when limbs ye threaten and life,
e'en though a finger
outweigh its worth,
from me ye wrest not the ring!
For limbs and life,
— it without love
in bonds of fear
fettered they be —
my limbs and my life —
see! — so
freely I fling away!

He lifts a clod of earth from the ground, holds it over his head, and with the last words throws it behind him.

The Rhine-Maidens.

Come, sisters!
Speed from the madman!
Though valiant and wise
he seems to himself,
yet in bonds and in blindness is he!
Oaths he plighted —
and heedeth them not!
Runes he readeth —
and recks them not!
A glorious gift
once was his own —
that he has lost it
knows he not;

but the ring that will deal him death —
the ring he will not surrender!

Farewell! Siegfried!

A woman proud
will this day thy wealth inherit;
our prayer by her will be heard.
To her! To her! To her!

(They swim away, singing.)

Siegfried

(looks after them, smiling).

Alike on land and water
women's ways I now have learned:
the man who defies their smiles,
they seek by threats to frighten;
if then he scorn their threats
they sting him with scolding tongues!

And yet —

but for my plighted oath,
of these so winsome maids,
full sure, had one soon been mine!

Calls of hunting-horns are heard from the heights: SIEGFRIED
answers the call with his horn.

— o —

GUNTHER, HAGEN and VASSALS come during the following
from the heights.

Hagen

(still on the height).

Hoihol

Siegfried.

Hoiho!

The Vassals.

Hoiho! hoiho!

Hagen.

Found is the place, then,
where thou hast hidden?

Siegfried.

Come ye down! Here 'tis fresh and cool!

Hagen.

Here rest we now;
make ready the meal!
Lay down the booty,
and bring out the wine-skins!

They lay the game in a heap. Wine-skins and drink-horns are produced. All lie down.

Hagen.

The game from us he hunted;
be now the wonders told us
of Siegfried and his chase.

Siegfried.

Ill fares it with my meal:
to share your booty
e'en must I now beg.

Hagen.

No booty thine?

Siegfried.

For wood-game went I forth,
but water-fowl only I found:
yet had I been fitly furnished,
a brood of water-birds
to you had I brought as booty,
who sang to my ears ill tidings,
that slain to-day should I be.

Gunther

(starts and looks darkly at HAGEN).

Hagen.

That were an ill-starred chase,
if a lurking beast should chance
to slay the luckless hunter.

Siegfried.

I thirst now!

(He lies down between GUNTHER and HAGEN.)

Hagen.

I heard it rumoured, Siegfried,
that when the birds are singing
their speech thou dost know:
can that be the truth?

Siegfried.

Their singing, long
have I heeded no more.

(He drinks and offers the horn to GUNTHER.)

Drink, Gunther, drink:
thy brother brings the draught!

Gunther

(looks into the horn with horror).

The draught is poor and pale:
thy blood alone is there!

Siegfried

(laughing).

Then let our blood be mingled!

(He pours from GUNTHER's horn into his own so that it overflows.)

Now mixed the wine runs over:
to earth, our mother,
a cordial let it be!

Gunther

(with a deep sigh).

Thou over-joyous man!

Siegfried

(low, to Hagen).

His mirth Brünnhilde mars!

Hagen.

Her voice is not so clear
as song of birds to thee!

Siegfried.

Since women their songs have sung me,
the birds have I clean forgot.

Hagen.

Yet once thou heard'st them well?

Siegfried.

Hei! Gunther!
gloomy man!
Give me thy thanks,
and tales of the days
of my boyhood will I tell thee.

Gunther.

My thanks be thine.

Hagen.

Now sing to us!

All lie down near SIEGFRIED who alone sits upright.

Siegfried.

Mime, know ye, then,
was a dwarf:
he had fostered me,
driven by greed,
that, grown to strength,
for him I might slay
in the wood a dragon grim
who lay there guarding a hoard.
So smithing he taught me
and forging sword-blades:
the task the craftsman
ne'er could achieve,
the learner's cunning
yet had to master:
out of a shattered weapon's splinters,
new to fashion a sword.
My father's blade
forged I anew.

Ne'er was steel
stronger than Nothung.
Fit for the fight
then it was deemed;
together we sought the wood:
there slew I Fafner, the foe.

Now let your ears
heed well my tale:
marvels have I to tell you.
From the dragon's blood
my fingers were burning;
I raised them straight to my mouth:
but when the blood
scarce had wetted my tongue,
then what the birds were singing
I seemed to hear like speech.
On a branch one sat there and sang: —
“Heil Siegfried now owneth
the Nibelung's hoard,
if hid in the cavern
the hoard he finds!
Let him, too, win him the Tarnhelm,
'twill serve him for deeds of renown:
but could he discover the ring,
it would make him the lord of the world!”

Hagen.

Ring and Tarnhelm
took'st thou away?

The Vassals.

Again then heard'st thou the wood-bird?

Siegfried.

Ring and Tarnhelm
when I had seized,
then once again
I gave ear to the warbler;
he sat above me and sang: —
“Heil Siegfried now owneth

the helm and the ring.
Oh, let him not trust
to the falsest of friends!
for Mime, too, covets the hoard,
and now craftily lurks on the road:
to his death he lureth on Siegfried:
let Siegfried trust not in Mime!"

Hagen.

The warning was good?

The Vassals.

Got Mime his payment?

Siegfried.

With murderous drink
he came to my side;
shy and shaking,
he told me his falseness:
Nothung paid him his wage!

Hagen

(laughing harshly).

He forged not the sword
yet soon did he feel it!

The Vassals.

What more didst hear from the wood-bird?

Hagen

(has filled another drink-horn and drops the juice of a herb into it).

Drink first, hero,
from my horn:
I mixed thee a noble draught,
that its magic may wake thy remembrance,
and old times may not escape thee!

Siegfried

(looks thoughtfully into the horn and then drinks slowly).

In grief to the branches
gazed I aloft;
there still he sat and sang:

“Hei! Siegfried hath struck down
the evil dwarf!
Now know I for him
a glorious bride:
on rocky fastness she sleeps,
guarded by fire is her home:
who fighteth the flames,
wakens the maid,
Brünnhilde wins for his own!”

(GUNTHER listens with increasing astonishment.)

Hagen.

The wood-bird's counsel
didst thou follow?

Siegfried.

Straight, without pause
I hied me away:
till the flaming fell I reached;
I passed through its fire,
and found for prize —
sleeping, a woman fair,
all clad in glittering mail.
The helm I loosed
from the glorious maid,
my kiss awoke her from sleep! —
ah, then like flames of fire enfolded me
beauteous Brünnhilde's arm!

Gunther.

What saith he?

Two ravens fly up out of a bush, circle over SIEGFRIED
and then fly away.

Hagen.

Those ravens' speech! —
canst thou read it aright?

(SIEGFRIED stands up suddenly and, turning his back to
HAGEN, looks after the ravens.)

Hagen.

Vengeance is their decree!

He thrusts his spear into SIEGFRIED's back. GUNTHER and the VASSALS rush towards HAGEN.

Gunther and the Vassals.

Hagen, what dost thou?

SIEGFRIED swings his shield on high with both hands, as though to throw it upon HAGEN: his force fails him; the shield falls backwards and he himself falls down on it.

Hagen

(pointing to Siegfried).

Falsehood's payment!

He turns quietly away and then is seen through the gathering twilight slowly moving up the height over which he disappears. GUNTHER bends down, stricken with grief, at SIEGFRIED's side. The VASSALS stand round the dying man, filled with sympathy.

Siegfried

(held by two Vassals in a sitting position, opens his eyes).

Brünnhilde —

holiest bride —

awake! lift up thine eyelids!

Who hath locked thee
once more in sleep?

who bound thee in slumber so fast? —

Thy wak'ner came:

he kissed thee awake,
again now the bride's
bonds hath he broken: —

now laughs to him Brünnhild's delight!

Ah! those eyes
ever now open! —

Ah, what enchantment
wafteth her breathing! —

Blissful surrender —
sweet are thy terrors —
Brünnhild' greeteth me — there!

(He dies.)

The VASSALS raise SIEGFRIED's body on his shield and accompany it in a solemn procession thence over the rocky heights. GUNTHER follows immediately behind the corpse.

The moon breaks through the clouds and illuminates the funeral procession on the heights. — Mists then rise from the Rhine and gradually fill the whole stage up to the front. When the mists disperse, the scene is changed.

The Hall of the Gibichungs

with the river bank, as in the first act. — Night. Moonlight glitters on the Rhine.

GUTRUNE enters the hall from her chamber.

Gutrune.

Was that his horn?

(She listens.)

No! — he
cometh not yet. —
Dreams of evil
drove away my sleep! —
Then wildly
neighed his horse: —
Brünnhild's laughter
in waking I heard. — —
What woman was't
that to the shore I saw go down? —
I shrink from Brünnhild'! —
Is she within?

(She listens at the door right and calls):

Brünnhild'! Brünnhild'!
art awake? —

(She opens the door hesitatingly and looks into the inner room.)

Bare is her room! — —
then it was she
who to the river shore went down? —

(She starts and listens to a distant sound.)

Was that his horn? —
No! —
all silent!
Would but Siegfried return!

As GUTRONE hears HAGEN's voice she stands for a time motionless with fear.

Hagen's

(voice from without; coming nearer).

Hoiho! Hoiho!
Awake! Awake!
Torches! torches!
burning torches!
Home bring we
spoils of our hunt.
Hoiho! Hoiho!

(Increasing fire-glow from without.)

Hagen

(enters the hall).

Up, Gutrun!
Give Siegfried greeting!
Thy hero bold
now cometh home.

MEN and WOMEN in great confusion, with lights and fire-brands, accompany the procession returning home with SIEGFRIED's body. GUNTHER is with them.

Gutrune

(in great terror).

What befell! Hagen?
I heard not his horn!

Hagen.

The pale-faced hero
will wind it no more;
to fight or to hunt
no more will he hie,
no more will he woo winsome women!

Gutrune

(with growing horror).

What bring they here?

Hagen.

'Tis a boar's ill-fated victim:

Siegfried, thy husband, slain.

(The procession reaches the middle of the hall and the VASSALS set down the body on a hastily raised mound. — GUTRUNE shrieks out, and falls upon the corpse.)

Gunther

(tends GUTRUNE).

Gutrune! gentle sister!

look thou upon me!

speak but to me!

Gutrune

(coming to herself again).

Siegfried! — Siegfried is murdered!

(She pushes GUNTHER back violently.)

Hence! hence, faithless brother!

'tis thou hast slain my husband!

O, help me! Help me!

Sorrow! Sorrow!

My hero, Siegfried, is murdered!

Gunther.

Cast not the blame on me

cast there the blame on Hagen.

He is the accursed traitor,

by whom this hero was slain.

Hagen.

Art therefor wroth with me?

Gunther.

Grief and ill-fate

thine be for ever!

Hagen

(stepping forward with terrible defiance).

Yes, then! 'Tis I that did slay him.

I — Hagen —

dealt him his death.

To my spear was he decreed,
whereon his false oath was sworn.

Holiest heritage

have I by right now won me:

therefore I claim here this ring.

Gunther.

Away! what I have won,
that thou shalt ne'er make thine!

Hagen.

Ye vassals, give me my right!

Gunther.

Graspest thou Gutrune's dower,
shameless Niblung-son?

Hagen

(draws his sword).

The Niblung's dower
so his son doth seize!

He rushes upon GUNTHER who defends himself; they fight. The VASSALS throw themselves between. GUNTHER falls dead from a stroke of HAGEN'S.

Hagen.

Mine, the ring!

He grasps at SIEGFRIED'S hand which raises itself threateningly. GUTRUNE shrieks with horror as GUNTHER falls. All remain motionless with terror.

From the back-ground BRÜNNHILDE advances firmly and solemnly to the front.

Brünnhilde

(still in the back-ground).

Silence your sorrow's
clamorous cry!

Whom ye all have betrayed,
for vengeance cometh his wife.
(As she quietly comes farther forwards):
Children heard I
whining to their mother,
because sweet milk had been spilled:
yet heard I not
lament that befitteth
the highest hero's fame.

Gutrune.

Brünnhilde! Envy-cursed one!
Thou hast on us brought this bane,
for thou didst rouse the men against him;
woe, that to this house thou cam'st!

Brünnhilde.

Ill-starred one, peace!
for ne'er wert thou wife of his;
his leman alone
hast thou been.
His manhood's bride am I;
to me all his vows had been sworn
ere Siegfried looked on thy face!

Gutrune

(breaking out in sudden despair).

Accursed Hagen!
Woe, ah woe!
that thou the poison gav'st
that has stol'n her husband away!
Ah, sorrow! sorrow!
Mine eyes are opened,
Brünnhild' was the true-love
whom through the drink he forgot!

Full of shame she has turned away from SIEGFRIED and bends over GUNTHER's body in a dying condition, so she remains, motionless till the end.

HAGEN stands, defiantly leaning on his spear, sunk in gloomy brooding, on the opposite side.

Brünnhilde

(alone in the centre: after remaining long absorbed in contemplation of SIEGFRIED, she turns now to the men and women with solemn exaltation).

Mighty logs
I bid you now pile
on high by the river shore!
Bright and fierce
kindle a fire;
let the noblest hero's
corse in its flames be consumed.
His steed bring to me here,
that with me his lord he may follow:
for my body burneth
with holiest longing
my hero's honour to share. —
Fulfil Brünnhild's behest!

During the following, the young men raise a huge funeral pyre of logs before the hall, near the bank of the Rhine: women decorate this with coverings on which they strew plants and flowers.

Brünnhilde

(becomes again absorbed in contemplation of SIEGFRIED's dead face).

Like rays of sunshine
streameth his light:
the purest was he
who hath betrayed!
In wedlock, traitor,
— true in friendship. —
from his heart's own true-love
— only beloved one —
barred was he by his sword.
Truer than his
were oaths ne'er spoken;
faithful as he,
none ever held promise;
purer than his,
love ne'er was plighted:
Yet oaths hath he scorned,

bonds hath he broken,
the faithfullest love —
none so hath betrayed! —

Know ye why that was?

Oh ye, of vows
the heavenly guardians!
turn now your eyes
on my grievous distress;
behold your eternal disgrace!
To my plaint give ear,
thou mighty god!
Through his most valiant deed
by thee so dearly desired,
didst thou condemn
him to endure
the doom that on thee had fallen: —
he, truest
of all, must betray me,
that wise a woman might grow! —

Know I now all thy need? —

All things, all things,
all now know I:
all to me is revealed!
Wings of thy ravens
wave around me;
with tidings long desired,
I send now thy messengers home.
Rest thou, rest thou, o god! —

She makes a sign to the Vassals to lift SIEGFRIED's body on to the pyre; at the same time she draws the ring from SIEGFRIED's finger and looks at it meditatively.

My heritage
yields now the hero. —

Accursed charm!
terrible ring!
my hand grasps thee
and gives thee away.
Ye sisters wise
who dwell in the waters,
give ear, ye sorrowing Rhine-maids,
good counsel lives in your redes!
What ye desire
I leave to you:
now from my ashes
take ye your treasure!
Let fire, burning this hand,
cleanse, too, the ring from its curse!
Ye in the flood,
wash it away,
and purer preserve
your shining gold
the streaming star of the Rhine,
that to your sorrow was stol'n. —

She has put the ring on her finger and now turns to the pile of logs on which SIEGFRIED's body lies stretched. She takes a great fire-brand from one of the men.

Fly home ye ravens!
tell your lord the tidings
that here on the Rhine ye have learned!
To Brünnhilde's rock
first wing your flight!
there burneth Loge:
straightway bid him to Walhall!
For the end of godhood
draweth now near.
So — cast I the brand
on Walhall's glittering walls!

She flings the brand on the wood-pile which quickly breaks out into bright flames. Two ravens fly up from the rock and disappear in the back-ground.

Ye, race who abide
in blossoming life,
this rede I give you —
heed it well!

When ye see, in the kindling fire,
Siegfried and Brünnhild' consumed;
when ye see the river-daughters
bear the ring away to the deep:

to northward then
look through the night!

When the heaven there gleams
with a holy glow,
then know ye all —

that Walhall's end ye behold! —

Though gone like breath
be the godly race,
though lordless I leave
behind me the world:
my holiest wisdom's wealth
to the world I now reveal. —

Not goods nor gold,
nor glory of gods;
not house nor hall,
nor lordly pomp;
not guileful bargains'
treacherous bonds,
nor feigning custom's
harsh decrees: —

blessing in weal and woe
Love alone can bring! —

This passage was not set to music

Two young men bring in the horse; Brünnhilde seizes it and quickly unbridles it.

Grane, my steed,
I greet thee, friend!
Know'st thou to whom
and whither I lead thee?
In fire radiant
lies there thy lord,
Siegfried, my hero blest.

To follow thy master,
joyfully neigh'st thou?
Lures thee to him
the light with its laughter?
Feel, too, my bosom,
how it doth burn;
glowing flames
now lay hold on my heart:
fast to enfold him,
embraced by his arms,
in might of our loving
with him aye made one!
Heiaho! Grane!
give him thy greeting!
Siegfried! Siegfried!

Seel Brünnhild' greets thee in bliss!

She has swung herself impetuously on to the horse and makes him leap into the burning pile of logs. The flames immediately blaze up so that they fill the whole space in front of the hall, and appear to seize on the building itself. The men and women press to the front in terror. As the whole space of the stage seems filled with fire, the glow suddenly subsides, so that only a cloud of smoke remains which is drawn to the background and there lies on the horizon as a dark bank of cloud. At the same time the Rhine overflows its banks in a mighty flood which rolls over the fire. On the waves the THREE RHINE-DAUGHTERS swim forward and now appear on the place of the fire. HAGEN, who since the incident of the ring has observed Brünnhilde's behaviour with growing anxiety, is seized with great alarm at the appearance of the Rhine-daughters. He hastily throws spear, shield and helmet from him and rushes, as if mad, into the flood, crying out: Back from the ring! WOGLINDE and WELLGUNDE embrace his neck with their arms and draw him with them into the depths as they swim away. FLOSSHILDE, swimming in front of the others towards the back, holds up the regained ring joyously. — Through the bank of clouds which lie on the horizon a red glow breaks forth with increasing brightness. Illumined by this light, the THREE RHINE-DAUGHTERS are seen, swimming in circles, merrily playing with the ring on the calmer waters of the Rhine which has gradually returned to its natural bed. — From the ruins of the fallen hall, the men and women, in the greatest agitation, look on the growing fire-light in the heavens. As this at length glows with the greatest brightness, the interior of Walhall is seen, in which gods and heroes sit assembled, as in Waltraute's description in the first act. — Bright flames appear to seize on the hall of the gods. As the gods become entirely hidden by the flames, the curtain falls.

—o—

R. Wagner.

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